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THE MONIST

MOSES.*

ALL that is great and significant in humanity is accomplished by great and significant personalities. To be sure we have been warned against exaggerated personality worship or hero worship, and have been told that the so-called great men are nothing but the exponents of mighty currents and tendencies of their time. In this thought lies a certain truth, in so far as great men do not fall from heaven but require some connecting links: the time must be ripe for them, must to some extent have need of them, and on closer inspection we will usually discover that the currents and tendencies of their contemporaries have met them half way; but that these currents attained their aim, that these tendencies were actualized, is solely and simply due to the merit of the great men themselves, and therefore has earned for them the gratitude of humanity and of history which associates these events with their names.

What is thus true in general of all great men and significant human affairs is also very especially true of religion. For religion is life, the most personal life. It lives only in personalities and through personalities. All great and important events in the history of religion are ineradicably connected with the names of particularly favored

* A lecture delivered at Breslau, October 19, 1908, as the first of a series of lectures on the four great founders of the world-religions. Translated from the German by Lydia G. Robinson.

personages who appeared to their contemporaries as prophets and apostles of God, who had himself taken possession of them and had become a living power within them.

Among these the founders of religion naturally stand in the first rank. They created something entirely new and consciously strove to lead their contemporaries on new religious paths and to bring them a divine truth which had previously been hidden from them. And as founders of world religions, Moses, Buddha, Mohammed and Jesus stand in the first rank.

The earliest of them is Moses. To him we stand in a very different relation from that in which we stand to Buddha or Mohammed. The latter men do not concern us directly and at best can have for us only a scientific objective interest. We are much more likely to see in them enemies and opponents of our Christian religion, its most dangerous rivals in the competition for the spiritual dominion of the world, while Moses and Jesus are in our minds inseparably connected. In Moses we see a direct predecessor of Jesus,—the point of departure of the great religious movement which has found its historical conclusion and spiritual perfection in Jesus. Sufficient reason to devote to this man our particular attention, and indeed our task of sketching him and his work is an especially fascinating and alluring one which will yield a rich reward.

Unfortunately, however, the undertaking is at the same time a very difficult one, and I must express myself with regard to it openly and without reservation. The difficulty lies in the nature of the sources at our command. Buddha and Mohammed stand before us in the full light of history in spite of the great amount of legendary material which attaches to their personalities. We can not say the same of Moses. But have we not the five books of Moses? Could we wish more or better material? It is only the German Bible that knows anything of the "Five

Books of Moses." The Hebrew, Greek, Latin and even the English Bibles do not ascribe these books expressly and directly to Moses. And in the last century and a half, science has worked so vigorously and persistently on just this so-called Pentateuch, that we are justified in speaking here of positive results.

The Pentateuch originated from the combination of various original documents, the oldest of which is perhaps half a millennium later than Moses, so that accordingly the earliest narratives of Moses and accounts of his work which have come down to us are further removed from him in time than we to-day are from Luther. But the Pentateuch, to be sure, contains not only narratives, but laws as well. Is it not possible that one or another of these legal constituents proceeded from Moses himself? In historical tradition he is, of course, the law-giver *par excellence*! When it comes to an estimate of Moses's value for the history of religion, I must express myself frankly and honestly and must also substantiate statements which will probably seem most surprising to many of my readers.

It is my firm conviction that the science of Old Testament criticism of the last generation not only asserts but proves—proves positively, that the great coherent priestly code of the Pentateuch as it has found its characteristic stamp in the code of the tabernacle and in the so-called third book of Moses (Leviticus), is quite late, and does not belong at the beginning of the development as its foundation, but at the end as its culmination. That the coherent code presented in the so-called fifth book of Moses (Deuteronomy) originated in the seventh century was proved by De Wette as early as 1805, and this knowledge has become the common property of Old Testament science. We may leave out of consideration the three poetical pieces ascribed to Moses, his Song (Deut. xxxii. 1-43), his Blessing (Deut. xxxiii), and his Prayer (Psalm xc). Hence there are

only a few pieces of legal import which come seriously into question. These are the so-called Book of the Covenant (Exodus xxi-xxiii) and the Decalogue, or Decalogues, and both are to be found in the earliest original documents.

The Book of the Covenant is old beyond any doubt. It is the earliest attempt in Israel at a detailed formulation of law, and it has acquired a particular significance by the fact that it is this very code which shows most striking parallels to the famous codex, found in 1902, of the Babylonian king Hammurabi who dates back almost a thousand years earlier than Moses. But each closer investigation of the Book of the Covenant makes it more impossible to assume that Moses himself was its author. The work and legislation of Moses were intended for nomadic hordes which were yet to become a nation for the first time, and in whom we may not assume a settled state of civilization founded on agriculture. The whole legislation of the Covenant, however, is calculated for a settled agricultural population, to some extent also engaged in commerce and living under a sort of juridical administration. In the first place, the very detailed regulations about goring cattle are significant. In the Semitic Orient, cattle never and nowhere belong to nomad tribes but are exclusively domestic and farm animals; Semitic nomads raise only sheep and goats. Laws like those regarding injuries to field and vineyards from unrestrained cattle or the ravages of fire, or that fields, vineyards and olive groves should not be tilled the seventh year but should be left to the poor, have not Sinai for a background or the deserts of Kadesh, but the fertile land of Palestine. Then, too, when a regulation requires that the doer of a bodily injury which does not prove fatal must pay the injured one for the time he is bedridden, and also the cost of his recovery, we have a condition of society in which the daily wage can be calculated

in money, and in which professional physicians practise for money, which could never be the social condition of a nomad people even if it were no longer purely nomad but had already advanced to the most primitive agricultural stages. The Book of the Covenant was certainly drawn up at a comparatively early date. In it we can see the codification of customs in practice in the time of the earliest kings in the manner of the oldest German *Weis-thümer*; but Moses can not have given his contemporaries such a legislation.

We now come to the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments, in which we see the work which belongs peculiarly to Moses, and which occurs first to our minds when the name of Moses is mentioned. Because of the importance of the matter, I must here enter more into detail. It is first of all noteworthy that this Decalogue has left behind no traces whatever in the early and oldest literature. The earliest passage to be taken into account is in Hosea who says of his contemporaries that they swear, lie, kill, steal and commit adultery (Hosea iv. 2). But the prophet uses other words than those in the Decalogue, and furthermore the order of the sins is entirely different, so that this passage at least *need* not have reference to the Decalogue.

Moreover, it is well known that the Decalogue occurs twice in the Pentateuch in different forms (Exodus xx and Deut. v). The first, for instance, alleges as a reason for resting on the Sabbath, the rest of God on the seventh day after the six days employed in creating the world; the other, consideration for servants, in order that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou (Deut. v. 14). Of course this difficulty is not insurmountable, for on two stone tablets we must think of the ten commandments as formulated in lapidary briefness, perhaps as follows:

“Thou shalt have none other gods before me.

"Thou shalt not make thee any image or any likeness.

"Thou shalt not misuse the name of God.

"Thou shalt keep the Sabbath holy.

"Thou shalt honor father and mother."

But the gravest essential considerations arise against the possibility that even such a nucleus has come down directly from Moses. The Sabbath command and the image prohibition contain insurmountable difficulties. The Biblical celebration of the Sabbath consists everywhere in rest and cessation from labor. It has therefore been designated as a rest offering. But as a matter of fact, such a cessation from work is actually possible only for agriculturists and never for nomads; for the work which the nomad has to perform can not be set aside at will. The cattle must be fed and watered, gathered together and milked on Sunday or holiday as well as on a workday. To attest this fact I will call no less a witness than Jesus, who says in the Gospel of Luke (xiii. 15): "Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?" in which the impossibility of carrying out the Sabbath command for the stock raiser is directly admitted. It is indirectly admitted in the fact that Mohammed, who otherwise borrowed everything from Judaism, did not adopt the Sabbath, because, opportunist that he was, he said to himself that the institution was not suited to his Arabians. In its Biblical sense the Sabbath command is absolutely impossible as a fundamental law of a nomadic people. At the most Moses may have arranged some sort of a religious celebration for every seventh day. The suggestion which has been lately raised that the Sabbath in ancient Israel did not mean the seventh day and a rest day for every week, but the full moon in opposition to the new moon would overcome this objection, but its foundation is very insecure and its maintenance would develop immense difficulties.

In the same way, facts,—undeniable historical facts,—make it impossible to adhere to the image prohibition as Mosaic and as a fundamental command of the religion of Israel. In Dan, where as in Bethel calf worship was carried on officially, which later the prophets struggled against and denounced, a race of priests officiated, which were descended from a grandson of the founder Moses; hence a direct descendant of Moses became the official priest of the Golden Calf! How could that be possible when every child of Israel (modernly speaking) in the Sunday school must know that Moses pronounced as his second commandment for Israel, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness”? Yes, a notorious idol has even been traced back in all naïveté to Moses himself. In the temple at Jerusalem at the time of the prophet Isaiah there was still a brazen serpent to which the Children of Israel offered sacrifices. Therefore it was not merely an historical relic from the years in the wilderness, but a representation of deity, which Moses was said to have wrought, and which King Hezekiah caused to be broken in pieces (2 Kings xviii. 4). These are undeniable facts reported in the Old Testament itself.

Further we must consider that we have no polemic from Elijah and Elisha against the calves of Dan and Bethel. If they showed zeal for the God of Israel against the Tyrian Baal, they also showed zeal for the golden calves as the official form at that time of the worship of God in the kingdom of Israel. Even the prophet Amos who appeared in the midst of Bethel and occupied himself in great detail with the cult there, finds no word of complaint for the Golden Calf there. Hosea who stigmatized that ancient and revered symbol by the disrespectful expression, “calf,” was the first to engage in polemics against this and every image and symbolical kind of worship, but simply from reasons of good sense, and without any implication that it

was a great sin which Moses had already forbidden. All of this would be absolutely impossible if the Decalogue of Exodus xx had been known to every Israelite as a fundamental command of the religion of Moses and was generally current as such. But if two of the ten commandments are essentially untenable then the whole becomes untenable.

And to make the question still more involved, we have a second Decalogue in Exodus, an entirely different one which likewise was given to Moses on Sinai and reads as follows: (Exodus xxxiv. 14-26):

"Thou shalt worship no other god. . . .

"Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.

"The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep. . . .

"Every firstling is mine. . . .

"Thou shalt observe the feast of weeks. . . .

"Thou shalt observe the feast of ingathering. . . .

"Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven;

"The fat of my sacrifice shall not remain until the morning.

"The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring...

"Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk."

These are the ten commandments on the basis of which, according to the oldest narrators, the so-called Yahvists, the covenant on Sinai was confirmed. In spite of the fact that the two first commandments are essentially identical, it is quite impossible to refer both Decalogues to one original form. This Decalogue of the Yahvist redaction characteristically contains no ethical prescriptions whatever except such as pertain to the religious service; and accordingly it finds the essence of religion in worship. Our own familiar Decalogue bears the relation to this one that Amos bears to his contemporaries.

We must also grant that the tradition that Moses had

made the covenant of Sinai on the basis of ten commandments is very old, but the commandments themselves are missing; for even the Decalogue of Ex. xxxiv can not have been formulated by Moses since it also rests upon the assumption of agriculture and festivals founded upon agricultural customs,—and if we are honest Moses loses nothing by our refusing to ascribe to him this Decalogue. If he had actually established the religion of Israel upon this foundation he would not belong to the greatest religious heroes of mankind.

Accordingly, then, the result of our investigation, which may perhaps seem destructive, is that we have no documents or authentic sayings of Moses, likewise no accounts of him which are even approximately contemporary. Under such circumstances can we dare after all to give a history of Moses and his work? But softly! If we have no historical documents in the usual sense we still have documents from Moses in a higher sense, not written on crumbling stone or moldering parchment, but in living men, as we might say with the Apostle Paul (2 Cor. iii. 3), “Not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone but in fleshy tables of the heart.”

Upon the character and history of the people of Israel his work has left such lasting and unmistakable traces, and tradition has retained for us such a great number of highly significant unimpeachable facts that we need be in no doubt. To be sure, documents of this kind, not written with ink, are not always easy to read, and I shall surely not be misunderstood if I often express myself with a certain hesitation; but we shall and can enter upon our task comforted,—yes, I flatter myself, that my readers will feel even especial confidence in a representation of the work of Moses given from a standpoint which they will probably consider very radical, because they have the impression that the author has carefully guarded himself from every incidental

illusion and has avoided every possible source of error in every way practicable.

There is an additional point which lightens our task with regard to Moses; and that is the peculiar double position which he shares with Mohammed only of all the great founders of religions, namely that his is a personality belonging to profane history as well as to the history of religion; he not only founded the Israelitish religion but he also created the Israelitish nation. In his own mind the two sides of his work could not be separated, for in the rôle of prophet he exercised his political activity, as we would call it, in the name of his God as His representative with a definite mission; of this tradition leaves us in no doubt, and in this particular it has certainly drawn his likeness with great accuracy. But we can consider historical facts apart from their religious character and motives, and it is easier to gain a picture of historical than of religious facts. For instance, we can establish the historical facts of the crusades without regard to the religious character and the religious roots of the movement. If we do so we shall obtain only a one-sided picture of them, nor can we have a complete and accurate picture until we have established these historical facts objectively. According to my firm conviction it is also possible to establish the historical facts of the life and work of Moses objectively, and this must be our first task.

In the pages of profane history Moses stands before our eyes as the liberator of his people from Egyptian bondage and as their leader and ruler in peace and war. The Biblical accounts with regard to the fate of the fathers of Israel in pre-Mosaic times permit of the sharpest critique and become the more brilliantly verified according as they are the more exactly investigated and observed. I consider it as proven that Ramses II, the Sesostri of the Greeks, whose mummy was found a number of years ago,

was the Pharaoh of the oppression, and his son and successor, Merenptah, the Pharaoh of the Exodus. In Moses, the hero and leader of this expedition, tradition sees a Hebrew of the tribe of Levi. And just this fact is unquestionable because it alone offers us the key to one of the most puzzling phenomena in the history of Israel.

It is remarkable that the tribe of Levi appears in two forms which have nothing in common except the name. The earliest tradition describes it as a ruthless and violent secular tribe, who were cursed and condemned to destruction by the patriarch because of a bloody crime, and were actually destroyed. In the later tradition the Levites appear as a purely spiritual race of priests, who from the beginning were set aside for the service of God. The event which resulted in the overthrow of the secular tribe of Levi can have taken place only when Israel came into possession of Palestine, that is to say, in the time after Moses. This event was the treacherous and barbarous capture of the city of Shechem, which brought no blessing to the wicked tribe and its accomplice, Simeon. They succumbed to the revenge of the Canaanites when Israel solemnly separated from them and left them to expiate their burden of sin alone. That tradition should of its own accord have made Moses out to be a member of this cursed tribe is simply unthinkable, whereas if he were really a Levite the riddle is easily solved. Those portions of the tribe of Levi which belonged to the family of Moses and which were very closely connected with him and had placed themselves at his disposal, took of course no part in the criminal undertaking of the rest and so were not entangled in the catastrophe in which it resulted. Thus it happened in fact that only the priestly families remained, and these could hardly have the ambition to reestablish themselves as a secular tribe.

This Hebrew of the tribe of Levi, however, found access,

by a happy chance to the civilization and culture of Egypt, and was educated entirely as an Egyptian. It is certain that his name cannot be accounted for by Semitic derivation, whereas in the form *Mesu* it was a purely Egyptian name, which can be authentically proved to have been generally current at that time. Then too, Pinehas, a traditional name in the family of Moses, which we can not trace back to any Semitic root, is a purely Egyptian *Penehesu*, which likewise may be authentically proved. According to the Biblical narrative, Pharaoh's daughter found the child Moses in the Nile under circumstances familiar to us all, and adopted him as her son. The non-Biblical accounts give her name as Termuthis, or Merris, and in fact we can point out the two names Tmer-en-mut and Meri among the female members of the family of Ramses II.

The Biblical account touches but lightly on the childhood and youth of Moses. It presents him to us at the first as a man and the champion of his people. This deficiency too has been supplied for us by non-Biblical literature. According to Josephus the Egyptian priests demanded his death when he was first brought before Pharaoh, because a prophecy said that this boy would one day bring great evil to Egypt; but his foster mother protected him and bestowed upon him a careful education.

When Moses grew up, Egypt was invaded by the Ethiopians, whom no one had been able to withstand. Then according to the instruction of an oracle Moses was placed at the head of an Egyptian army and performed his task with wonderful intelligence and power, won victory after victory, and finally besieged the Ethiopians in their capital city, Meroë. There the Ethiopian princess, Tharbis, fell in love with him and on his promise to marry her surrendered to him the capital of the enemy, whereupon he returned in triumph to Egypt. We smile over such stories, but the fact remains authentically established that at the

end of the reign of Ramses II and at the beginning of that of Merenptah a certain Mesu was the Egyptian viceroy of Ethiopia, "Prince of Kush," as he was officially styled. Even in the Bible itself we have a very remarkable and puzzling passage where Miriam and Aaron make accusations against Moses on account of an Ethiopian wife he had taken (Num. xii. 1). In any case the peculiar double position of Moses, Hebrew by birth but Egyptian by education, is to be looked upon as historical, and in this respect we are involuntarily reminded of Arminius, the Teutonic Hermann the Cheruscan, who likewise entered into Roman service and arose to the dignity of a Roman knight, but only in order to learn from the Romans how he might free his people from their yoke. The inclination of his heart led Moses likewise to his people; he would rather be the brother of these despised slaves than live in the enjoyment of Egyptian luxury and splendor. If Moses had been born an Egyptian what could have induced him to place himself at the head of the Israelites with whom he could not even make himself understood because of the essential difference between their languages? Perhaps pity for the oppressed, who according to the Egyptian view were no better than the cattle which they herded? Or injured ambition because he did not rise rapidly enough in his career and so would rather be the first among the despised foreigners than to be second among the Egyptians? Neither can Moses have been a member of the Semitic tribes who led a nomad life around Sinai and with whom tradition has brought him in closest connection. The desert is egoistic. To but few does it give a scanty sustenance, so that every tribe would think well before inviting strangers to the table at which they themselves could hardly be satisfied even if they would have won additional strength and influence by such an increase in their numbers. In this point too the tradition

holds its own and every attempt to depart from it causes only entanglement in unsolvable difficulties.

But Moses was above all a founder of religion and therefore it becomes of very particular interest and the highest possible value for us to familiarize ourselves with the religious environment in which he developed. That the careful Egyptian education which fell to his lot was also a religious education, may be taken for granted. And the esoteric religion at least of the Egypt of that day stood upon a very high plane. Its belief was centered in a life beyond. The most important witness of the religious literature of Egypt is the so-called Book of the Dead which treats of the fate of the soul after death. When the soul escapes the fetters of the body it comes before the judgment of the dead where forty-two judges examine its conduct, each with regard to some one particular sin. If these judges declare the soul to be pure it enters into the realm of light, it becomes God once more and returns to God from whom it came. Especially have the mysteries of Osiris this cycle for their object, and we know definitely that in the bosom of the Egyptian priesthood monotheistic speculations were customary, or those with a tendency towards monotheism. To be sure these speculations never led to a practical religious monotheism but at most to a philosophical pantheism. Heliopolis, the Biblical On, had always been one of the main centers of the mysteries of Osiris; and yet it must arouse our attention when an Egyptian tradition, handed down to us from Manethos, says that Moses came from the circle of the Heliopolitan priesthood of Osiris, and when Biblical tradition places Joseph in direct connection with them, since Pharaoh gives him to wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-phera, priest of On (Gen. xli. 45).

The attempt had even been made in Egypt once before to establish monotheism practically. Not through the

priests, it must be noted, but on the part of the state. Amenhotep IV, the last direct scion of the renowned 18th dynasty, the so-called "heretic king," undertook to establish by the power of government the worship of one God whom he saw incarnate in the solar disk *aten*, hence a solar monotheism, beside which all other cults were to be prohibited. That this remarkable man (who also took a fancy to have himself and his family portrayed in a repulsively ugly fashion), did not attain his purpose, and that the heresy of the heretic king died with him, may be taken for granted. Posterity has condemned him to non-existence, and his name was effaced from all inscriptions, but his attempt remains noteworthy for the history of religion, and there is no doubt but that Moses knew of these things which took place perhaps a hundred years before his time. Thus by no means did he lack religious stimulation in Egypt.

Furthermore his must have been a pronouncedly religious nature, an innate religious genius, and with regard to this we must take into consideration certain influences of his own people. According to Biblical tradition the work of Moses did not fall from heaven but had its point of contact in his own nation and found a prepared ground; neither did the religious history of Israel originate with Moses, but had its beginnings in an earlier time, closely connected with the person of the patriarch Abraham. In this important point too, it is my firm conviction that the Biblical tradition is a perfectly correct; namely, that we must assume the patriarchs of the people of Israel to have had before Moses a pronounced religious character which raised them above related tribes and which was a spiritual power ever against the Egyptians.

The decisive moment in Moses's entire life was during his sojourn among the Midianites in the wilderness of Sinai. There he had become the son-in-law of a Midianite

priest to whom even the Israelitish tradition assigns a certain share in the work of Moses. Even the natives of this Sinai neighborhood we must not imagine as entirely, or even half, wild bushmen. On the contrary, Arabia was the center of an ancient and high civilization, although whether it really reached back to the times of Moses may well be questioned. But at least the Arabian borderlands were under the influence of Egyptian and Babylonian civilization and religious movements, since it is well known that Sinai bears the name of the ancient Babylonian moon-God, Sin. Accordingly the religious soil is here no fallow land. The Biblical tradition itself says distinctly that the new name Yahveh, by which Moses designated the God of their fathers, originated from Sinai and was derived from there, that even before Moses a god Yahveh was worshiped on Sinai.

Here on Sinai took place the event which was for Moses what John's baptism in the Jordan was for Jesus, and the day of Damascus for the Apostle Paul; the Biblical account describes it as the theophany of the burning bush (Exodus iii). We can not explain it nor analyze it but must accept it as a fact—as the phenomena of the religious life do not upon the whole admit of demonstration and mock every rational explanation, but nevertheless are realities. Here God himself laid hold upon him and took possession of him. From this moment he knew himself to be called of God as the saviour of his people and that he must plan his entire future life in the service of this God. He hastened to Egypt in order to call his people to freedom in the name of the God of their fathers who had appeared to him on Sinai. And here too the religious motive glimmers plainly through the oldest account, for they are to travel in the wilderness in order to celebrate there a great festival for their God. And the bold enterprise succeeded. Even in the most supreme extremity and in the greatest dangers

in the face of the despairing and discouraged people Moses clung to the God who had called him, and his faith was not to be shaken. There, as the Biblical account states briefly and strikingly, Israel saw the powerful hand of Yahveh which he had shown to the Egyptians. Then the people feared the Lord and believed the Lord and his servant Moses (Ex. xiv. 31). This triumphant moment made Israel into a nation and Israel never forgot it. Here Israel recognized the God of their fathers who with a strong hand and an outstretched arm had delivered his people and had led them forth out of the house of bondage, out of the land of Egypt. Here too we have a matter of fact to recognize; the deliverance from Egyptian bondage must have been effected by an extraordinary event in which those who experienced it could see nothing but the direct personal intervention of God himself.

At this point, very involved questions begin to arise for the historian which I will at least indicate briefly. It is well known that the mountain where the law was given to Moses is sometimes called Sinai and sometimes Horeb. Are these only two different names or do they indicate two different mountains? And where may this Sinai, or Horeb, be found? Besides it is still maintained on reasons not to be despised, that the oldest narrative makes no mention whatever of this digression by way of Sinai, but had the people of Israel from the beginning wander directly to Kadesh. These are questions which may never be answered with certainty and which need not occupy us here any further. With Kadesh, surnamed Kadesh Barnea in distinction from other places of the same name and to-day the oasis Ain Qudês at the southwest extremity of the Plateau of Azâzime, we have absolutely firm ground beneath our feet. Kadesh is pointed out by tradition so consistently and so positively as the stopping place of Israel after the Exodus and as the scene of Moses's organizing

and administrative activity, that any doubt of this fact would only draw a smile from a methodically trained historian. Now we shall advance to the investigation of his work.

However, there are two methodological considerations to be disposed of first. The man who wishes to influence his times and to direct them into new paths, must stand above them. Therefore even when we have become acquainted with the religious plane of his time we have not yet familiarized ourselves with his personal religious consciousness, for genius is an absolutely incommensurable quantity, and so likewise is religious genius. Furthermore it is a matter of experience that after religious movements have entered into life they usually forfeit their original freshness and purity so that they become secularized and ossified. Supposing that we did not have the four gospels, or that Luther's writings were lost, who would be able to construct the Gospel of Jesus in its entire purity and splendor from the faith and life of the Christian communities of the middle of the 5th century? Or who, by considering the condition of the Lutheran Church at the time of the Protestant scholasticism or the writings of a Calovius and Quenstedt, could imagine that Luther had composed such a precious booklet as his "Freedom of the Christian"? This privilege, however, we must grant also to Moses, and the more since we possess actually no documents by him or about him. Yes, even the fact that we can not positively prove the existence of definite laws or even positively prove their non-existence proves nothing against Moses. As Jesus said to his disciples (John xvi. 12): "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye can not bear them now," so Moses too may have thought, and I am firmly convinced that such is the fact. I might make the statement that Moses shows himself to be a genius in pedagogy since he would not take the second step before the first, and

promoted his work most emphatically by that which he did *not* give his people. He gave them no superfluous ballast but only what they could grasp and what they needed; not philosophical speculations, nor dogmatic instruction, but life, the most vital life, religious life, moral life.

I will select two important points for the explanation of what I mean by the two methodological considerations. It may have offended many of my readers when I was obliged to declare that Moses could not have enacted a law prohibiting images and have made it a foundation stone of his religion; but does this prove, or do I mean by it to say, that Moses was a worshiper of images and thought it right and praiseworthy to worship God in images? The only object relating to worship which we can refer back to him with certainty is the holy Ark, a pure symbol which never misled the people to any idolatrous misuse; and at the same time the tribes and races in the midst of which Israel lived at the time of Moses were not idol worshipers in this sense, but they too had only religious symbols; so that Moses had no practical occasion for such a command, whereas he himself acted according to this knowledge, and his work lay entirely in this direction.

Now for the chief central question with regard to monotheism. That Israel did not possess a pure, clearly conceived monotheism for centuries after Moses, that in the eyes of Israel Yahveh was not the one God in heaven and upon earth, but that they saw realities also in the other gods, is absolutely certain. But what does this prove in regard to Moses? Can not Moses personally have held to a pure monotheism? Who will decide *a priori* the point beyond which genius may not pass, and must Moses have confessed a religious perception inferior to that of the author of the ancient narrative of paradise and the fall of man, whose monotheism indeed leaves nothing to be de-

sired? Could not Moses be content with what he actually accomplished, to bid Israel to worship its own God only and to forbid it to serve any other God besides? If Israel was actually convinced that it had only its one God to serve, who laid claim upon it as his possession alone, and wished to be everything to it, that would be practically much more valuable than any theoretical doctrine about the nature of God, and Moses could confidently leave the rest to God and time.

So much is made nowadays of monotheistic currents in the religions of ancient civilizations. But however great we may assume the influence of the Egyptian esoteric doctrine upon Moses to have been, even if a pure monotheism was taught in these mysteries, still to Moses belongs the enormous merit that what was whispered about among the initiated in Egypt was now preached from the house tops and made useful to humanity, and especially that he had drawn the religious consequences therefrom. These same Egyptian priests who in their esoteric teachings gave themselves up to the most profound speculations, prayed in public with the most earnest air of solemnity to cats and ibises, crocodiles and the "holy ox" as Theodore Mommsen translates the "Apis," and rendered to them divine honors; but a purely theoretical monotheism which exists in a brotherly fashion side by side with the grossest practical idolatry, is religiously not worth a farthing. In this respect Moses accomplished a sweeping reform and performed a complete task: such a double entry method of book-keeping was impossible in the religion of Moses. In all religions there have been monotheistic tendencies, currents and attempts, but only in the religion of Israel had monotheism become a power, and indeed a power determining the entire religion; and this is the work and merit of Moses. Nor did he hesitate to shed blood, as is shown by that remarkable story attested by the oldest tradition,

in which he enlisted the tribe of Levi to aid in putting down a religious rebellion (Exodus xxxii. 26 ff., compare Deuteronomy xxxiii. 8 f.) When Saul caused all the wizards and those who had familiar spirits to be hunted out and executed (1 Samuel xxviii. 3 and 9), he proceeded entirely in the spirit of the zealous God of Moses who permitted none other to rule beside himself. And this enormous energy which supplanted all rivals making it impossible for them to exist side by side with himself, the God of Moses manifested also in the spiritual realm. Israel is the only nation of which we have knowledge, that has never had a mythology, that never differentiated divinity according to sex—the concept “goddess” is so absolutely inconceivable to the Israelites that the Hebrew language never attempted to form the word “goddess.” This is a miracle performed by Moses which is greater and more incomprehensible than the greatest and most incomprehensible which tradition has ascribed to him. A man who has exercised such an enormous influence on the entire thought and sensibility of his people and has modelled it so completely according to his own personal higher knowledge, such a one truly belongs to the greatest spiritual heroes of humanity.

We have repeatedly called attention to the fact that Moses aimed first of all to awaken religious life. Especially significant for this and of definitive importance for all later time is the form of his religious foundation. Yahveh alone Israel's God, and Israel Yahveh's people,—this is perhaps the shortest formula to which we can reduce the fundamental idea of Moses. But how came this relation to exist? All tradition unites in agreeing that in its form the peculiar establishment of the religion of Israel consisted of a covenant between Yahveh and Israel, made through the intervention of Moses. By this means alone was this relation lifted out of the realm of nature into that of the moral

decision of the will. This covenant was grounded upon experience of the power of Yahveh. He had made real that which appeared impossible, had freed Israel from the bondage of Egypt, had therefore shown himself more mightily than even powerful Egypt with all its many gods, and had also given further proof of his power to help. So the God to whom Israel in this covenant had vowed herself by a free act of will, was not an abstraction, not an unyielding destiny but the personal living God of history, the relation to him was a personal ethical relation which as it was entered upon voluntarily could also be broken voluntarily. Whether Moses himself had already drawn this conclusion, and had it in mind, we know not. Later it gave the prophets a basis for their ethical preaching and their deepening of the religious relation.

That this relation of Israel to Yahveh was not purely theoretical but also manifested itself in a practical manner may be taken for granted. Its official manifestation, so to speak, was to be found in the religious worship. That Moses had regulated the religious service and standards for the worship of Yahveh is a matter of course. To be sure we can not reconstruct exactly this Mosaic order of service in particulars, but we must assume that Moses inspired a new spirit into the worship which made it possible for it to keep the most important heathen abominations at a distance. Among the nations in the vicinity of Israel the customs of infant sacrifice and religious unchastity prevailed. These were proscribed by the religion of Israel and wherever they crept in were recognized at once as poison drops foreign to its blood.

Furthermore, the relation of Israel to Yahveh manifested itself in a moral life, according to the requirements of this God. Here we have the peculiar center of the activity of Moses whom tradition describes before all as the judge and organizer of his people. And right here has

the consequence of his activity been visible and significant. In fact Israel stood far higher morally than the neighboring peoples. It must have had a particularly pronounced sense of right and wrong, and the sphere of morals in a most special sense was peculiarly Israel's honor and renown. From the beginning Israel had abhorred unchastity in a manner that we do not find to be the case with other Semites. All of this is due to Moses, who silently and unobtrusively organized his people in Kadesh, moralizing, guiding, and sowing noble seeds, and who educated them religiously in the sense and spirit of the Decalogue, even if he did not himself formulate it, and so made it possible for them to become the nation of religion and in the course of centuries to bring forth the greatest of all.

It is most probable that Moses also died in Kadesh. According to all indications Israel's stop there must have been a pretty long one, and it is an essential feature of the Israelitish tradition that neither Moses nor any of those who came out of Egypt was permitted to tread the promised land; and this is of greater significance when we consider that we are dealing with a distance which under normal conditions could have been easily passed in a fortnight. Of special importance for this question, however, is the explicit statement that nobody knows where Moses's grave is "unto this day" (Deut. xxxiv. 6). When we consider what an important part the grave, and especially the grave of a hero, played in the conception of ancient Israel, we must declare it to be absolutely unthinkable that the grave of Moses should have remained unknown if he had died and had found his last resting place in a spot which Israel considered as belonging to its domain. But we must look upon this circumstance too as providential, for if the grave of Moses had been known, there is no doubt but a personal cult would have been connected with it which might have

had evil consequences for the religion he had founded. This was not to be. He was to live on only in his work.

There is a beautiful Jewish legend about the death of Moses. It is possible to translate the fifth verse in the last chapter of Deuteronomy relating to his death, "So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there *at the mouth* of Yahveh." Therefore the Jewish legend tells how in the last hour of Moses's life God fulfilled his ardent wish to behold His face, which in life He was obliged to refuse him (Ex. xxxiii. 18-23) and so Moses died at the mouth of God who by a kiss took to Himself the soul of his faithful and trusted servant. A deep meaning lies in this story, for verily did Moses receive the consecration kiss of deity. Whoso recognizes in Jesus Christ the end and turning point in the history of humanity must also confess that before him no greater mortal trod this earth, and that to no second mortal does humanity owe more than to Moses, the man of God. The foundation of what in Jesus Christ has found its conclusion and its perfection, was laid by Moses, since he was the first to give to the world clearly and consciously as the foundation and basic principle of all religious life, the faith in the one, living, personal, holy God.

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